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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

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Thursday, 10 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Minami
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

United Nations peacekeeping operations

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of India, Pakistan and Rwanda to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to very warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and I give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the important steps being taken and the measures being put in place to end the exploitation and abuse of vulnerable people by the United Nations personnel sent to protect them.

For many people caught up in poverty and conflict around the world, the United Nations represents their final hope for a better future. When sexual exploitation and abuse are perpetrated against these individuals by the United Nations personnel authorized to protect them, it further victimizes and violates them and inflicts untold harm on already fragile communities. It undermines the trust between the United Nations and its beneficiaries, betrays the values and principles that the United Nations purports to advance, and tarnishes the credibility of United Nations peacekeeping operations and the United Nations as a whole. The impact is not limited to the location of the abuse, but reflects on the efforts of tens of thousands of peacekeepers and civilian staff working tirelessly to save lives and protect people around the world in difficult and often dangerous conditions.

In June 2015, I, like the Council, was deeply dismayed by allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of children by foreign military forces in the Central African Republic and the United Nations response to those allegations. In that context, I appointed a high-level external independent review panel on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic. The panel was led by Justice Marie Deschamps, with two other eminent persons. In mid-December 2015, the Panel submitted its report, which depicted a United Nations that uncovered the abuses but failed to respond meaningfully and with the speed, care or sensitivity required.

A number of the panel's recommendations are already being implemented, while those that have far-reaching implications or that require action by legislative bodies, Member States and partners are being considered. Given the importance of addressing the systemic weaknesses that the panel's report exposes, I have appointed a Special Coordinator, Ms. Jane Holl Lute. Ms. Lute will support me in reviewing and advancing the implementation of the panel's recommendations and in strengthening our response to such abuse.

Let me turn to my latest annual report to the General Assembly on special measures on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/70/729). The report shows an increase in the number of new allegations in 2015, with a total of 99 for the United Nations system. Sixty-nine of those allegations were lodged against United Nations personnel serving in peace operations. That reflects an increase in allegations within United Nations peacekeeping operations, with multiple allegations against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and increases in allegations from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Further allegations have continued to come to light this year.

In the face of that disturbing trend across a number of our peacekeeping operations, it is imperative that our collective response be more effective. My report proposes strong new initiatives in three key areas: first, ending impunity; secondly, helping and supporting victims; and thirdly, strengthening accountability, including through action by Member States.

First and foremost, to end impunity, greater transparency is critical. This year for the first time, my report names the countries of alleged perpetrators. Country-specific information is publicly available on the website of the Conduct and Discipline Unit of the

Department of Field Support. I intend to expand that information to cover all outstanding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, including the status of referrals for criminal accountability. That will hold accountable and enable the United Nations and Member States to address every allegation of sexual exploitation or abuse in a thorough and timely manner through proper investigation and just punishment.

Secondly, the victims, many of whom are children, need our protection and support. We are finalizing the establishment of a trust fund that will provide them with the medical, psychosocial and legal services that they need. I have asked Member States to approve the transfer to the trust fund of payments that will be withheld in substantiated cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. I encourage Member States to make voluntary contributions to the fund. I have also urged all troop- and police-contributing countries to designate paternity focal points. We will follow up vigorously to ensure that children who are born as a result of these terrible abuses receive the support they need. Member States must also consider how they will respond to claims from victims who pursue legal action to seek redress.

Thirdly, accountability demands the conduct of solid investigations that can withstand judicial scrutiny in disciplinary and criminal proceedings. That will require developing uniformly high standards of investigation. It will entail building the capacities of immediate response teams to gather and preserve evidence. All investigations should be concluded within six months at most, with the most urgent cases concluded within three months. I urge Member States to adopt this standard.

I also urge Member States to cooperate with the Office of Internal Oversight Services in the conduct of investigations. I am strongly committed to monitoring accountability for violations. Where appropriate, that will include taking action up to and including the repatriation of commanders or of whole contingents. We have already put that into practice in repatriating troops serving in the Central African Republic, owing to alleged sexual exploitation and abuse. When I requested the resignation of my Special Representative for MINUSCA in August 2015, I further signalled that the Organization would hold itself accountable for such violations. I will also consider ending the deployment of uniformed personnel from specific Member States if there is prima facie evidence of widespread or systemic exploitation and abuse.

Accountability demands that Member States live up to their responsibility to bring to justice those who have committed crimes while serving with the United Nations. We expect them to impose sanctions commensurate with the seriousness of the offence. I have asked Member States to establish on-site court martial proceedings and to ensure that domestic legislation applies to sex crimes committed by their nationals while they are serving within United Nations peace operations. I have also called for the collection of samples of the DNA of alleged offenders.

We also continue to emphasize prevention. Significantly, this year for the first time, we will be able to vet all uniformed personnel for previous allegations of misconduct while in the service of the United Nations. We are increasing our support for predeployment training by Member States. We will also consider imposing new rules to curtail the social activities of peacekeeping contingents, including by designating certain geographical areas as out-of-bounds.

(*spoke in French*)

Those efforts constitute an important step forward towards ending such crimes and the terrible suffering they inflict on their victims. We can ensure the implementation of the principle of accountability, and in particular criminal accountability, only if the troop- and police-contributing countries quickly and carefully investigate such allegations and if the responsible parties are duly punished. The United Nations is firmly determined to work with Member States to ensure that national judiciary proceedings make it possible to implement the principle of accountability and to fight impunity.

(*spoke in English*)

This is a global issue. It is not confined to any one region, mission or nation. I am determined that the United Nations must lead by example. Sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel demand nothing less than decisive and bold action. I am committed to working with Member States to confront that criminal conduct and to justify the trust of the people we serve to ensure that this Organization remains a beacon of hope for the most vulnerable.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his important briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing today, for the important report upon which it is based (A/70/729), and for his determined leadership in tackling what he has rightly called a cancer in our system. We know that he has faced considerable push-back against his efforts to bring to light these horrific abuses and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable, and we thank him for holding firm.

Let me begin by reading out a quote,

> "The Security Council is deeply concerned with the allegations of sexual misconduct by United Nations peacekeeping personnel... The Security Council... recognizes the shared responsibility of the Secretary-General and all Member States to take every measure within their purview to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by all categories of personnel in United Nations peacekeeping missions to enforce United Nations standards of conduct in that regard.
>
> The Security Council reiterates the importance of ensuring that sexual exploitation and abuse are properly investigated and appropriately punished." (*S/PV.5191, p.7*)

Those words were spoken in this Chamber nearly 11 years ago, in May 2005, by the Security Council President at the time. She was speaking on behalf of the Council at its first-ever meeting on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeepers. Like today's, that meeting was convened following the release of a report commissioned by the Secretary-General at that time, Kofi Annan, in order to lay out a strategy for eliminating the scourge of such abuses in peacekeeping operations. The report (see A/59/710), as many of us here know, followed a series of disturbing allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in 2004, not unlike those that have surfaced since last year.

Yet as we all know, despite the commitment made by the Council over a decade ago to address this problem, the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers persists. According to the report released by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last week, 69 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were levied against uniformed and civilian personnel serving in peacekeeping missions last year. That represents a 20 per cent increase in reported violations from the previous year. More than half of the allegations concerning peacekeeping operations involve the rape or sexual abuse of children. And those are just the cases we know about. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, who took over as Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) last August, has said, the cases reported are likely to be just the tip of the iceberg.

We have long known that one of the most effective ways to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse is to send a clear message that perpetrators will be held accountable, so it is deeply alarming that, according to the Secretary-General's report, out of 69 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in 2015, in only 17 instances were investigations completed by January 31 2016 — 17 out of 69 — and in only one of those cases did a country report to the United Nations that it had punished a perpetrator in response to a substantiated allegation. The perpetrator in that case was found to have engaged in a sexually exploitative relationship. As punishment, he was suspended for nine whole days.

Some have argued that this discussion has no place in the Security Council, implying that they do not think that sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers have an impact on international peace and security. They are mistaken. In addition to being a heinous abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse erode the discipline of military and police units and undermine the confidence of local communities in peacekeepers, both of which are critical to fulfilling Security Council mandates. More broadly, when those entrusted with being protectors become perpetrators, it undermines the credibility of peacekeeping missions everywhere, as well as the legitimacy of the United Nations writ large. And along with that, it undermines our ability to address effectively the serious threats of our time.

I have listened really hard to those who think that the Council has no role to play in overseeing discussions about what we do next to curb sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, but I have to say that I honestly do not understand the argument. I do not. It is the Council that sends peacekeepers into conflict areas because we believe that their presence is essential to

promoting international peace and security. We deem it our responsibility as a Council to oversee every part of their missions — how many soldiers and police officers to send, what their mandate is, when they can use force — and we give them clear mandates to protect civilians.

So let me pose my question to the skeptics this way. When Governments attack civilians, it is our job; when armed groups and non-State actors attack civilians, it is our job; when terrorists attack civilians, it is our job. So why in the world, when the United Nations own peacekeepers are the ones attacking civilians — when peacekeepers commit the sickening of crime of raping children — is it someone else's job? Can anyone explain that? Why is that the exception? The Security Council cannot have responsibility for protecting civilians against all threats from all forces except those whom we directly oversee.

As we all know, a crucial part of accountability is transparency. The United Nations, its Member States and the Security Council need to know when soldiers and police officers are accused of abusing the privilege of wearing the blue helmet. We need to know whether those allegations are being adequately investigated and, where appropriate, punished. And victims and their communities need to know that justice is being served. Let us imagine if it was a member of our own family. Yet the opaqueness of the existing system has made it virtually impossible for any of us to know these things. All to often, we do not know whether investigations have been opened, and even when we know that investigations are ongoing we do not know whether they are being carried out promptly, thoroughly or impartially.

Without basic facts, it is impossible to enforce a zero-tolerance policy. It is no coincidence that we have had a zero-tolerance policy for a long time, and yet sexual exploitation and abuse allegations have risen. That is not a coincidence. There is not sufficient accountability to our own policy. Louis Brandeis, one of the most eloquent justices who ever served on the United States Supreme Court, once said that "[s]unlight is said to be the best of disinfectants". Yet allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers are too often allowed to remain in the darkness, where the rot they cause continues to spread, to the detriment of the entire enterprise of peacekeeping.

That is why it is so important that the Secretary-General's report brings to light, for the first time, the nationality of the personnel who face credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, and it is why we commend the United Nations for starting to post on its website new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, including the date on which the report was received, information about the nationality of the accused, and whether the alleged victims are minors. It is through such reporting that we know that, in the first three months of this year, 26 additional allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse have been reported. That is a horrifying number.

We can and must do more to shine a bright light on this enduring problem. A place to start would be providing additional information on the status of investigations. For example, while we know that the majority of investigations into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse from 2015 are pending, we do not know when those investigations were opened. This data is crucial for gauging whether countries are acting in a timely manner.

Some countries have adamantly opposed this push for greater transparency, in particular the practice of identifying the nationality of peacekeepers credibly alleged to have committed such abuses. They claim that it unfairly singles out troop- and police-contributing countries that are putting their personnel at risk in some of the most difficult environments around the world. We commend the service of those troop- and police-contributing countries. Let me be very clear. The vast majority of the 91,000 troops and 13,000 police officers in United Nations peacekeeping missions serve honourably and with courage, putting their lives on the line every day to protect people in countries very far from their own. They neither commit sexual abuse nor do they turn a blind eye to it. And most troop-contributing countries are serious about holding to account soldiers and police officers from their forces who would perpetrate such abuses, recognizing that impunity for sexual exploitation and abuse undermines the effectiveness of their troop contingents as a whole, whether they are serving in a United Nations mission or any other mission.

Yet the fact that so many — the vast majority — serve so honourably is all the more reason why troop- and police-contributing countries should want to bring these cases to light, investigate them, and hold accountable those who have committed abuses.

Those serving honourably are the ones who have the greatest incentive to prevent the sickening acts of a few from tarnishing the noble service of so many. When peacekeepers commit sexual exploitation and abuse with impunity, the fault lies not only with the peacekeepers who commit those deplorable acts, the commanders who look the other way or the countries that fail to conduct proper investigations. The blame rests on all of us, including the countries that fail to adequately train peacekeepers to prevent and root out these problems, the Member States that fail to press troop- and police-contributing countries to hold perpetrators accountable, and the United Nations institutions that fail to report on the magnitude of the problem or repatriate units when countries prove unable or unwilling to investigate credible allegations of abuse. This is an all-systems failure.

Let me just give just one example. According to the United Nations, there were seven separate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a single mission, MINUSCA. One allegation was reported in January, one in February, four in August and one more in September. The majority of the alleged victims of the abuses were kids. As the allegations continued to add up, members of the Council, including the United States, pushed for the repatriation of the unit. In the meantime, more and more victims continued to come forward. In January of this year there were three more credible allegations of sexual violence and abuse against the same unit, followed by five more in February. Think about that: eight credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse reported against a single group of peacekeepers in just two months — in seven of those instances the alleged victims were children. How could we let that happen? All of us. How could we let that happen?

In late February, the entire contingent from the Democratic Republic of the Congo was repatriated — the first time the United Nations had ever repatriated an entire contingent for sexual exploitation and abuse. It was the right thing to do. It sends a clear message to all countries that there will be consequences for failing to address this serious problem. But it should never have taken so long. The Security Council was told the contingent would be repatriated, but the repatriation was delayed for operational reasons. That is unacceptable. The experience should force us all to ask: What if those soldiers had been sent home sooner? How many kids could have been spared suffering unspeakable violations that no child should ever have to endure, and that they will have to carry with them for the rest of their lives?

We have to do better by these victims. That means not only securing justice, but also ensuring that they receive the care they need and deserve in the aftermath of such crimes, both in the short term and in the long term. The Secretary-General has proposed a trust fund to support special services for victims that will withold payments from repatriated individuals and direct the funds to victims. We should move swiftly together to create that fund.

In conclusion, let me share the story of one of those alleged victims, a 14-year-old girl who lives in Bambari, in the Central African Republic. She recently told a human rights organization that, in December 2015, she was walking along a path near a peacekeeper base when she was accosted by an armed soldier whose uniform she recognized as one worn by peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She said,

> "He slapped me in the face and made me continue to walk on the path. Then he ripped off my clothes and used them to tie my hands behind my back. He threw me on the ground, placed his gun to the side and got on top of me to rape me. When he was done, he just left. I had to put my clothes on, and I went home."

In 2005, the author of the Secretary-General's first report (see A/59/710) on this problem, Prince Zeid, who of course is now the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, warned the Council here in the Chamber that sexual exploitation and abuse

> "would carry with it the most serious consequences for the future of peacekeeping if we were to prove ourselves incapable of solving [the] problem." (*S/PV.5191, p. 4*)

The same holds true to this day, and the profound consequences of failing to solve this problem — for peacekeeping missions, for the United Nations and for so many individuals like that 14-year-old girl in Bambari — continue to add up. We knew how to fix the problem then, and we know how to fix the problem now. We cannot wait any longer. The United Nations has presented a Security Council draft resolution to take our responsibility to address this grave issue as

an immediate step. We urge all Council members to support it.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing.

Since their inception, United Nations peacekeeping operations have played a significant role in maintaining international peace and security. To date, hundreds of thousands of peacekeepers, from more than 120 countries, have participated in 69 peacekeeping missions. More than 3,000 peacekeepers made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. They deserve to be inscribed in our memories forever.

While United Nations peacekeepers have made an enormous contribution, a handful of them are suspected of having commmitted sexual exploitation and abuse in some countries. Such acts have seriously undermined the reputation of peacekeeping operations, runs counter to the purpose of those operations and seriously tarnishes the overall image of the United Nations. China supports the Secretary-General and the Secretariat in pursuit of a zero-tolerance policy for peacekeepers involved in sexual exploitation and abuse. And we support the international community in adopting counter-measures.

First, the international community should pay great attention to the problem and combat it resolutely. The parties concerned should attach great importance to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, in the interest of safeguarding the reputation and credibility of the United Nations and guaranteeting the healthy development of peacekeeping operations. The Security Council and other organs, including the Secretariat, troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and the States concerned, should strengthen cooperation, fully implement the zero-tolerance policy, resolutely combat sexual exploitation and abuse, never condone such acts, bring perpetrators to account and deliver justice to victims.

Secondly, the international community should adopt an integrated policy that combines punishment and prevention. Merely pursuing prosecution after the fact cannot fundamentally resolve the problem. The parties concerned should attach importance to boosting prevention efforts and seek to eradicate the underlying causes of sexual exploitation and abuse. It is important to analyse the various conditions that give rise to sexual exploitation and abuse. At every key link in the deployment of peacekeeping operations, comprehensive measures should be taken to prevent and respond to such acts. There is also a need to raise awareness among peacekeepers about the need to uphold discipline and respect the law, as well as to strengthen administration and management to ensure that sexual exploitation and abuse constitutes a red line that must never be crossed.

Thirdly, there is a need to improve management and raise standards. The Secretariat bears important responsibility for improving and strengthening the deployment of peacekeeping operations. It must further deepen the reform of peacekeeping operations and, by formulating norms and guidelines for peacekeepers, comprehensively upgrade deployment standards and the management of peacekeeping operations, strengthen communication with affected countries and TCCs with a view to ensuring that every peacekeeper deployed in a mission area adheres to ethical standards, strictly follows the law, maintains discipline and respects local populations.

Fourthly, capacity-building for TCCs must be strengthened. TCCs bear the primary responsibility for the acts of the peacekeepers they deploy. They must strengthen predeployment training to ensure that peacekeepers are well disciplined and able to carry out their mandates. The parties concerned must also pay attention to the actual difficulties facing TCCs, especially those from the developing world. They must also scale up assistance in the area of peacekeeping and comprehensively boost capacity-building in those countries. The international community needs to strengthen its cooperation with TCCs through bilateral, multilateral and regional organizations and provide them with technical assistance, such as training for personnel, and comprehensively upgrade the quality of their personnel at the level of management, as well as the overall capacity of peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I am very grateful to the Secretary-General for his urgency in bringing this issue to the Security Council and for his briefing today.

For nearly 70 years, the pale blue helmets of United Nations peacekeepers have been synonymous with the work of the United Nations. In the 16 missions ongoing today, and in the 54 that came before, each and every peacekeeper presents the human face of the Organization and the principles we stand for. In upholding those principles, many have paid the ultimate

price. At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to the 3,444 peacekeepers who lost their lives since 1948, including 104 from my own country. We all know why their sacrifice was needed. Peacekeeping, by definition, can be dangerous. It is the preservation of international security — not in word, but in deed. In the midst of conflict and chaos, peacekeepers bring safety and hope to those most in need, to those in the darkest moments of their lives.

To fulfil that crucial role, peacekeepers need the trust of those they seek to protect. When a girl looks up to a Blue Helmet, she should do so not in fear, but in hope. Every time that a peacekeeper fails to live up to our principles or fails to uphold the integrity and decency that is expected of the United Nations, that trust is undermined.

Today we have heard about the worst abuse of trust imaginable — the sickening actions of a small number of individuals now threaten the reputation of the entire United Nations. Such actions are a horrific betrayal of the faith placed in the United Nations by the very people in need of protection, people who have already suffered the trauma of conflicts. Those crimes truly are a cancer in our system.

The stories that have emerged from the Central African Republic are harrowing. We cannot shy away from them. We cannot hide behind an acronym. This is not "SEA". It is abuse. It is exploitation. It is women and girls being raped and manipulated for sex. For too long that has existed in the shadows, in rumours and speculation, concealed by incompetence and, yes, by conspiracy. Today we have brought overdue light to this darkness, we now need to prove that we will never let it happen again. We all have a role to play in that. We cannot pretend that this is a matter just for other countries. When our collective reputation is threatened, collective action is needed.

Ahead of their deployments to South Sudan and Somalia, all troops from the United Kingdom will be vetted rigorously and receive robust predeployment training covering sexual exploitation and abuse. I hope all troop contributing countries will do the same.

The United Nations system must also bear its share of responsibility. We welcome the Secretary-General's decisiveness in withdrawing units facing credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. We support his prerogative to name and shame countries that contribute those units, and we fully support the appointment of Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on the United Nations response to this terrible scourge.

But this is just the start. The coming months will need to see bold United Nations reforms. Those must include designing a system for reporting allegations that is trusted by host communities. When allegations are proven, the United Nations must act quickly and decisively, and well within the Secretary-General's suggested six-month deadline.

The United Kingdom has committed funds to assist the United Nations and the Special Coordinator in these efforts this year. Some of that money will be spent rebuilding much-needed trust in communities hosting peacekeepers. I hope that other Member States will join us in committing financial support too.

The world is watching us today. Let us be clear: this cannot continue; this must not continue. The report (A/70/729) of the Secretary-General is a wake-up call that simply cannot be ignored. It is a call for all of us to do everything in our power to protect those in our collective care. The reputation of peacekeepers, of the Security Council and of the United Nations is at stake. The Council has a clear responsibility to ensure accountability and to take action. I hope we can adopt the Security Council draft resolution under negotiation in the coming days. That will be a valuable step forward, but it cannot be our last.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing on issues of discipline and behaviour in peacekeeping operations.

We attach great importance to the work on the problem of the commission of violations, including sexual abuse by members of United Nations peacekeeping contingents, as well as United Nations staff members. We believe that the United Nations and its Member States must take all possible measures to prevent and fully put an end to such actions.

No less disturbing is the information regarding the flagrant cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by foreign non-United Nations troops deployed in conflict regions with the consent of the Security Council. Those contingents, like the Blue Helmets, should bring peace and security to those States. We categorically reject the provision of any privileges to those forces over the staff of United Nations

missions. There must be a single set of standards for all in combating that evil.

Problems related to discipline in United Nations operations on the ground are not new. For many years, it has been discussed in the General Assembly in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and in the Fifth and Sixth Committees. Preventive and proactive measures are also included in resolutions regularly adopted by the General Assembly, under the heading of "Criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on missions". Very often, with active participation by the General Assembly, the practice of preliminary training and induction courses for staff has been introduced, which is implemented by States together with peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Those measures are already yielding tangible results.

We believe that the involvement of all Member States in the process of establishing measures will determine the effectiveness of their implementation in practice. The key role lies with the troop-contributing countries of United Nations peacekeeping operations, which possess comprehensive information on the reasons we are unable to reduce and eliminate those shameful statistics.

Although we continue to believe that issues of peacekeeping discipline are not related to the maintenance of international peace and security, the Russian delegation showed great understanding from the very beginning for the United States initiative to strengthen the message of the unacceptability of sexual abuse by United Nations contingents under the aegis of the Security Council. At the same time, the draft resolution that has been circulated is far from ideal. It proposes a selective approach by excluding from the proposed measures both United Nations civilian personnel and non-United Nations personnel.

At the same time, as a result of ongoing negotiations in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping on that very topic, it would simply be wrong to set the Council against the General Assembly. While in no way do we minimize the seriousness of the sexual exploitation and abuse that we are discussing today, we would like to note that the collective responsibility for such actions proposed by the Secretary-General and a number of States raises questions. From our point of view, the focus should be on efforts made in good faith to find specific perpetrators, determine their guilt and have them stand trial.

A separate important task is taking steps to prevent such crimes and ensuring appropriate training and vetting of military and civilian personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations. The main burden there in cases related to troops and police is borne by troop-contributing countries. In the case of civilian personnel, the responsibility lies with the Secretariat. In that regard, we see no grounds for mentorship of Member States by the Secretariat. Among its ranks, there can also be people who are equally guilty.

At the same time, unfortunately, there remains the question of what to do with foreign contingents that have Security Council mandates to conduct operations to facilitate the resolution of conflict situations with the expectation that the operations will be carried out in good faith. We believe that cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by such forces should be thoroughly investigated by contributing countries and those found guilty must be brought to justice. There can be no impunity here. Otherwise, the Security Council will sooner or later have to consider the issue of withdrawing such authority from them.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of my country reiterates its categorical condemnation of sexual exploitation and abuse. Egypt also reiterates that it is important that Member States take the necessary measures to combat these crimes and eliminate them completely. The necessary efforts to help victims should be made. Egypt and all Member States are committed to respecting the zero-tolerance policy with regard to these crimes. I would like to highlight several items of importance in that regard.

First, the United Nations body responsible for the examination of issues of conduct and discipline within peacekeeping operations, including cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, is the General Assembly, whether through the Fifth Committee or the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. That is demonstrated by the fact that the report (A/70/729) of the Secretary-General presented to the Council today was initially submitted to the General Assembly, which is the competent body in this area. The General Assembly, which represents all the States Members of the United Nations, including troop-contributing countries, is undoubtedly the body that is the most apt to examine cases of sexual exploitation and abuse from

a broader angle that takes into consideration the various primary actors.

Secondly, any investigation of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse within peacekeeping operations must include the examination of all the different missions mandated by the Security Council. Moreover, such investigation should treat all United Nations personnel in the same manner without any discrimination whatsoever, because fair and equal treatment within the context of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse sends a strong message to all those who would be tempted to commit such a crime, and ensures that the victims will not refrain from reporting perpetrators because of their nationality, affiliation or the organizations to which they are connected.

Thirdly, Egypt believes that cases of sexual exploitation and abuse should not be used as a tool to attack troop-contributing countries or their reputation, or to undermine the significant sacrifice they are undertaking to re-establish peace and security for civilians. Cases of sexual exploitation are individual, isolated cases. They represent a handful of incidents in comparison to the over 100,000 troops deployed. Moreover, these cases are not representative of the conduct of troop-contributing countries. My delegation is therefore categorically opposed to a policy of collective punishment against forces that are making the ultimate sacrifice in order to implement a mandate under very difficult conditions.

Fourthly, the best way to combat these crimes is to have Member States conduct investigations straightway into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Moreover, the Secretary-General must be informed of the results of such investigations as soon as possible.

Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that United Nations camps are separated from civilian populations. Also, contingents should be rotated and provided with adequate living conditions.

Of course, we thank the Secretary-General for his commitment and for having presented his vision of combating cases of sexual exploitation and abuse to the Security Council. However, at the same time, Member States should have been given an opportunity and sufficient time to discuss this very important topic within the framework of the General Assembly.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal welcomes the initiative of organizing this meeting, which has afforded us an opportunity to hear a briefing by the Secretary-General on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations staff members. It follows the publication of his report (A/70/729) of 16 February 2016 on the special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, which has enabled us to better understand the scale and reality of this scourge.

In addition to harming the image and credibility of the Organization, these acts unfortunately overshadow the praiseworthy efforts and the heroic work accomplished by tens of thousands of soldiers for peace, sometimes at the cost of their lives. That is why Senegal reiterates its commitment to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and expresses its deep concern with regard to the increase in the number of new cases of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, which rose from 80 in 2014 to 99 in 2015. Furthermore, my delegation deplores the fact that the percentage of allegations that concern sexual acts against minors or non-consensual sexual relations with adults has again increased, rising from 35 per cent in 2014 to 55 per cent in 2015.

This extremely unfortunate situation, which the Secretary-General has just described to us, makes all the more necessary our unceasing bold efforts to prevent and punish sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable populations by individuals mandated to protect them. It goes without saying that the troop- and police-contributing countries have the primary responsibility of investigating allegations against their uniformed personnel and, if necessary, of initiating criminal proceedings and informing the United Nations in a timely way of the progress and results of those investigations.

Faced with this scourge, we must bolster our action by giving pride of place to a constructive, preventive, responsible and decisive approach. We must also bring those responsible for cases of sexual exploitation and abuse to justice. However, with regard to the measures we adopt, we will have to ensure that innocent individuals do not fall victim to collective punishment for the crimes of individuals, even as we ensure the respect of the dignity and rights of the victims.

Senegal, as a significant troop- and police-contributing country, would like to reiterate its commitment to take all the necessary measures to fully

assume the responsibilities incumbent upon it in this area. This commitment reflects the ideal that underpins our work in the field of peacekeeping, one of the key principles of which is clearly underscored in the 2016 plan of action of the Chief of Staff of the Senegalese armed forces, elaborated in the framework of training military personnel in the rights and protection of children:

> "The Senegalese armed forces, both within and outside our borders, have the duty not be perpetrators of abuse. Rather, they must be the protectors of vulnerable groups: women and children."

In that regard, I am pleased to recall that for Senegal the protection of civilians in the theatres of deployment of our troops constitutes the very essence of their presence. That is why the Senegalese armed forces are resolutely committed to incorporating the law of armed conflict into their training, planning and conducting of operations. The objective is to enable the men and women engaged in peacekeeping operations on the ground at all levels to better understand and especially to ensure respect for their obligations in the area of international humanitarian law and human rights.

To that end, Senegal, thanks to its continued cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the non-governmental organization Save the Children, has been able to organize several seminars and training sessions, including on international humanitarian law and respect for children's rights. We have also established, at the level of the Chief of Staff of the Army, a committee on the rights and protection of children, which is responsible for the implementation and coordination of training activities for military forces on the law and the protection of children before, during and after conflicts. In that regard, strict disciplinary measures have been stipulated for the perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law, particularly in cases of violence, abuse or rape. Such measures include, inter alia, imprisonment, repatriation, discharge from the army or the gendarmerie, and trial before civilian or military tribunals. That underscores the importance my country attaches to the training and appropriate predeployment preparation of our troops.

I therefore call on our bilateral, regional and multilateral partners to accompany and support troop-contributing countries in their efforts to prevent sexual violations and abuse, particularly in terms of training and predeployment preparation.

In conclusion, I wish to distinctly reaffirm that Senegal, mindful of respect for human rights and the protection of civilians in times of conflict, remains determined to ensure that its army, which is well known for its professionalism and republican character, strictly upholds those principles in its theatres of operation.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system, including measures undertaken to strengthen the Organization's response, as outlined in his report (A/70/729) to the General Assembly. The presence of the Secretary-General today demonstrates his clear commitment to addressing that challenge, which threatens to cast a long, dark shadow on the Organization's reputation. We welcome many of the messages he outlined to confront sexual exploitation and abuse and, as he has rightly said, to ensure that the United Nations becomes the vehicle of hope for the most vulnerable.

We also take note of the findings and recommendations on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse contained in various reports and reviews, most recently the report of the high-level external independent review panel on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic. We were particularly concerned over the findings of fragmentation of responsibility within the United Nations system and view the troubling lack of coordination as a major gap that needs to be addressed. In that regard, we welcome the appointment of Ms. Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to exploitation and abuse and look forward to continued updates on the recommendations and implementations.

We believe that sexual exploitation and abuse cannot be tackled in isolation. It requires the collective and concerted commitment and political will of all Members of the United Nations and the international community. We support the intention to address the sexual exploitation and abuse issue in a broader and more systematic manner across the United Nations system. In that connection, we note the Security Council's draft resolution, initiated by the United States delegation, and we will work constructively on it.

Malaysia also reaffirms the central role of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which has been mandated by the wider membership to deliberate on all issues relating to United Nations peace operations. It is important that our parallel efforts be complementary with our shared aim to eliminate the sexual exploitation and abuse, seek accountability and alleviate the harm caused to vulnerable people.

Accountability for perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse cannot be achieved under a shroud of secrecy. Therefore, we are supportive of the Secretary-General's measures to increase transparency in the accountability process. However, we reiterate that Member States, particularly the troop- and police-contributing countries, have the primary responsibility to hold their personnel accountable for sexual exploitation and abuse. In order to do so, information and credible evidence regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse must be channelled by the United Nations in a timely manner to Member States for subsequent action.

Malaysia believes that improving investigation procedures for sexual exploitation and abuse allegations increases the accountability process. Therefore, we are supportive of such initiatives, including the establishment of immediate response teams at peacekeeping missions to gather and preserve evidence and the adoption of a six-month time line for the completion of their investigations.

We reaffirm that Malaysia enforces a strict zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse for our peacekeeping troops. All Malaysian peacekeepers undergo compulsory predeployment training in which specific modules and briefings are conducted to raise awareness of acts that constitute sexual exploitation and abuse and the consequences of committing such acts. We also have national laws in place to ensure the prosecution and punishment of Malaysian peacekeeping personnel for serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse. We hope that the strong measures announced by the Secretary-General to strengthen accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse, including imposing sanctions against those who commit acts of misconduct and who fail to take actions against them, will create a deterrent effect and galvanize prevention efforts at the highest level.

We also note the decision of the Secretary-General to repatriate contingents where there is a demonstrated pattern of abuse or non-response to allegations of misconduct, which we view as a measure of last resort. At the same time, we call on the Secretary-General to issue clear criteria and guidelines in making such decisions and to engage constructively with police- and troop-contributing countries on that issue.

We must not forget that our discussion today was triggered by heinous acts against children by international peacekeepers, both United Nations and non-United Nations, in the Central African Republic. The series of sexual exploitation and abuse cases involving children and the failure to provide timely follow-up assistance to the victims underscores the continued need to raise awareness on and mainstream child protection in peacekeeping operations. We urge mission leadership to instil a culture of child protection in peacekeeping missions and stress the important role that child protection advisers can play in preventing and responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against children. The monitoring and reporting mechanism established under the Security Council's children and armed conflict framework should be utilized to collect and analyse information on sexual exploitation and abuse allegations involving child victims in order to ensure that necessary follow-up actions can be provided.

Knowledge is the best defence and the provision of training for peacekeeping personnel cannot be overstated as a means of prevention. Therefore, we also advocate mandatory predeployment training on child protection, in addition to training on sexual exploitation and abuse prevention for all United Nations peacekeepers, and we support the Secretary-General's initiative for troop- and police-contributing countries to issue certificates of compliance.

There is a tendency to discuss sexual exploitation and abuse in the abstract, in terms of numbers and percentages that keep us detached from the reality of sexual exploitation and abuse cases. In comprehensively addressing the issue, let us remember that these are real people — mothers, daughters, fathers and sons — who suffer the anguish and harm of sexual exploitation and abuse. The international community must ensure that they receive the necessary attention, including medical and psychological assistance. They must be our priority in pursuing accountability.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming my delegation's readiness to work closely with Council members and

other partners and stakeholders, especially the troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as the Secretariat, to address our common aims. The pledge taken by all United Nations peacekeepers, entitled "We are United Nations peacekeepers", recognizes the Blue Helmets as the embodiment of the aspirations of all the people of the world for peace. The expectations of the international community and the local populations who they are sent to protect are extremely high. That is why cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and the subsequent failure to take action by the international community are very painful to confront. However, only when we are honest about our own shortcomings can we genuinely work to overcome them. Only then can we live up to the lofty ideals we seek to uphold.

Mr. Minami (Japan): At the outset, my delegation would like to extend its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his briefing, which stressed three points: ending impunity, protection and support for victims, and ensuring accountability.

It is regrettable that allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers persist. According to the Secretary-General's report (A/70/729) released last week, 69 allegations were reported in 2015. Bearing in mind that peacekeepers are deployed to protect people and that they are sometimes the last hope of people suffering in conflicts, sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers is absolutely unacceptable. It is also unacceptable that sexual exploitaiton and abuse has significantly damaged the credibility of the United Nations. Japan therefore strongly supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and believes that effective measures must be taken until there are no cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Japan supports the Secretary-General's decision to repatriate contingents where there is a demonstrated pattern of misconduct. The main aim of that measure is not to point fingers at the contingents but to urge troop- and police-contributing countries to take action. We need to realize that investigating the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse is primarily the responsibility of the troop- and police-contributing countries, and they have to take appropriate actions with regard to the allegations and hold those personnel accountable for sexual exploitation and abuse. By doing so, troop- and police-contributing countries can demonstrate their commitment to the zero-tolerance policy and preserve the honour of the vast majority of peacekeepers who are fulfilling their tasks seriously.

Japan has supported and will support the Secretary-General's efforts in tackling sexual exploitation and abuse through concrete contributions. One contribution is providing financial support for the online training of all categories of peacekeepers. Without sufficient training, no field personnel can maintain a high standard of conduct and discipline. With Japan's support, peacekeepers will be trained under the United Nations e-learning programme on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, which is to be operational in May this year. We are convinced that this programme will be a firm step towards the eradication of sexual explotiation and abuse.

Another concrete contribution that Japan is considering is in the area of support for victims. As the Secretary-General has recommended, it is necessary to secure specialized assistance to the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. At the second peacekeeping summit, held last September, Japan already expressed its commitment to providing support for a remedial action programme for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. We welcome the initiative of the United Nations to establish a trust fund to support victims, and we stand ready to consider the proposal.

Let me conclude by saying that all of us — the Secretariat, the Security Council and all Member States — have to cooperate in tackling such shameful misconduct by taking concrete measures for the sake of both victims and peacekeepers. Japan will continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General in this area. Japan also hopes that the Council will adopt this draft resolution as soon as possible.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his efforts and measures to combat sexual abuse within the United Nations. France welcomes his determination and exemplary mobilization to take all the necessary measures to prevent and fight sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations.

Sexual abuse committed by Blue Helmets, both military and police, but also by United Nations civilian personnel and international forces that do not operate in the United Nations command, is unacceptable. That is why France supports the Security Council draft resolution on sexual abuse under consideration. It is also why France supports the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at further strengthening the zero-tolerance policy through concrete proposals. A number

of them have already been implemented; others are still being considered in other forums. These exchanges, this momentum, are positive and are encouraging with regard to the future of peacekeeping operations.

The zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse must apply at all levels. First, at the level of the United Nations, it must apply on the ground. In peacekeeping operations, several operational measures will make it possible to change the daily lives of the local population: the repatriation of units suspected of sexual abuse, the appointment of focal points within peacekeeping operations to prevent sexual abuse, and efforts to improve support for victims. All these steps will contribute to changing the culture and reality of peacekeeping operations.

However, zero tolerance does not concern only the Blue Helmets. Unfortunately, among the civilian personnel of the United Nations programmes and agencies there have also been cases of sexual abuse, including by those who tend to the needs of the most vulnerable — refugees and displaced persons. That is why France calls for stepped-up vigilance and efforts to increase, through adapted infrastructure and means, the protection of these populations, often marked by extreme poverty and extreme weakness and are traumatized by the violence of conflict. We owe special protection to women and chilren, who are the first targets of various acts of abuse, violence and exploitation in camps and sites for refugees and displaced persons.

Zero tolerance must begin with its application at the level of the United Nations, but zero tolerance applies at the national level as well. It is the responsibility of every State to take the necessary steps to prevent sexual abuse and also to bring to justice those suspected of such abuse. That is what we do in France.

With regard to prevention, our security forces in France are systematically vetted regarding their history in terms of respect for human rights, in keeping with the policy required by the United Nations. Our security forces are also systematically trained on the protection of human rights and the fight against sexual abuse before deployment. France intends to strengthen its training and prevention system within the framework of its security forces. France is also pleased to announce that it will contribute to the financing of the office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse,special Ms. Jane Holl Lute. We warmly welcome her appointment.

Regarding the fight against impunity, France deploys, as requested by the Secretary-General, national investigation officers within its contingents in order to respond rapidly to allegations. Furthermore, as soon as allegations were reported in the Central African Republic, French justice opened judicial proceedings to shed full light on the situation. Justice must be carried out if these allegations are confirmed, in a way mindful of the fundamental principles of the law and with respect for the independence of the judiciary.

Zero tolerance must also be applied at the regional level. Regional organizations are not, unfortunately, spared allegations of sexual abuse. That is why it is essential to act at this level as well, especially as those organizations are often key partners of the United Nations in peacekeeping operations. Thus we call on the African Union — which incudes countries that contribute troops to the United Nations and through its own missions acts both both upstream and downstream of the Blue Helmets — to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations in these matters.

This public debate marks a movement for peacekeeping operations from which there is no turning back. They can no longer close their eyes and remain silent about sexual abuse. Today the Concil speaks publicly in order to break the silence and the stigmatization that burdens the victims so a to send them a message of hope.

Lastly, I would like to end on a note of encouragement and thanks for the tens of thousands of soldiers and police officers, from the United Nations or elsewhere, who are not implicated in the allegations and who put their lives on the line in order to save others. They should know that we do not wish to stigmatize them for the actions of others; on the contrary, we want to assure them that they can continue to do their work with the effectiveness it needs.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of today's meeting and are grateful for the stance taken by the Secretary-General in his report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (A/70/729), issued in February, given its overriding importance for the issues of credibility and moral support of our peacekeeping operations.

As the report says, such actions contradict and undermine the spirit of the United Nations and the very purpose for which its missions are created, which is to protect the populations of countries in extremely fragile situations and the poverty produced by conflict. Added to the suffering created in a context of war and instability is the fact that people are endangered by the possibility that the personnel sent to alleviate those situations are taking advantage of the circumstances to commit this kind of crime, which only results in greater despair among those affected, especially the most vulnerable, such as women and children, and to rejection of the presence of international peacekeeping missions.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela considers that acts of sexual exploitation and abuse in a context of armed conflict represent more than just a discipline issue; they are a shameful phenomenon that may violate international humanitarian and human rights laws. In that regard, we emphasize that Venezuela categorically condemns any incident of sexual abuse or exploitation committed by personnel from any foreign contingent, whether military, police or civilian, deployed in peacekeeping operations or special political missions, as well as by personnel from our Organization who are not considered to be deployed in such operations.

We are aware of the various categories of operations on the ground under United Nations mandates, particularly those of the Security Council, the various types of personnel who carry out functions within them — civilian, military or police deployed or not deployed — and the differences among those who have responsibility when it comes to taking measures to punish such crimes. However, we believe that, despite such differences and bureaucratic complexities, what is fundamental here is that we are talking about unacceptable and intolerable acts that compromise and damage the legitimacy and work of our Organization.

The United Nations must set an example of consistency and firmness and a high level of moral commitment when it comes to the importance of preventing the perpetration such acts, particularly regarding accountability, by United Nations personnel and those outside the Organization but authorized by it, whatever their country of origin or professional category. In that context, Venezuela supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for acts of sexual violence committed in peacekeeping operations or any military mission that has the Security Council's mandate or support. We should ensure follow-up and accountability even in cases where they are the responsibility of countries contributing troops or other personnel.

It is also important to emphasize that according to the figures in the report, of the 99 alleged cases in various operations, 30 involved personnel considered not to be deployed; 38 involved military personnel; 16, police officers and 15, civilian personnel considered as deployed in peacekeeping operations. Overall, 38 per cent of the total represents military personnel and 61.2 per cent, other categories. Those numbers should tell the United Nations, and the Security Council specifically, that any binding action that could be taken should involve sanctions and action to combat impunity for all categories of personnel, whether civilian, military, volunteers, police or support staff, regardless of their nationality.

This is an essential responsibility for our Organization. We agree with the Secretary-General that transparency and accountability are fundamental to the ability of the United Nations to demonstrate its collective adherence to a policy of zero tolerance, maintain the international community's trust, ensure justice for the victims and achieve the purposes of peacekeeping operations. It is also important to ensure that any investigation or punishment is guided by the principles of objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality. No country should receive privileged treatment, and there should be no difference between North and South, considering that countries of the southern hemisphere tend to be stigmatized. We believe this subject should not be politicized.

In our view, it is crucial to improve these mechanisms and to ensure that frequent dialogues are held with troop- and police-contributing countries, with the goal of discussing the topic and improving the coordination of action for a greater impact on prevention and the fight against impunity. In that regard, we reiterate that it is vital to fully implement article 44 of the Charter of the United Nations, which requires that troop-contributing countries be invited to participate in the decision-making process concerning the deployment of personnel in peacekeeping operations. In practice, that has never really been implemented.

While we therefore welcome the discussion of this sensitive issue in the Council, it is essential that we ensure close coordination on it with the General

Assembly, particularly through the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the body in charge of formulating comprehensive policies pertaining to the operations of such missions so as to avoid duplication of functions and to ensure that institutional efforts are not scattered around the Organization. In its 2015 report (A/69/19), the Special Committee emphasized that the same standards of personal conduct must be applied without exception to all categories of United Nations personnel. That is a principle that should be implemented in order to improve the Organization's credibility.

Another issue where improvements could be made is in the area of strengthening mechanisms to help victims, who in many cases have to deal with stigmatization and ostracism from their family members or communities and can sometimes be the target of retaliation by the perpetrators. That involves having the necessary resources for ensuring that victims are safe and receive proper medical and psychological care.

In conclusion, Venezuela would like to reiterate its commitment to strengthening the institutional, administrative and judicial mechanisms we need to deal with such cases, especially cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, committed by any personnel linked to operations authorized by the United Nations. In that regard, we have received and are discussing the text of the draft resolution proposed to the Security Council, and we hope it will take into consideration the views expressed today by the members of the Council.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also appreciate the leadership of the United States in that regard. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his strong and unambiguous stance on the issue discussed today.

Ukraine is convinced of the enormous importance of addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in a just, effective and timely manner. It is extremely disturbing that, despite measures taken to enforce the zero-tolerance policy, in the past year alone 69 allegations of serious misconduct in peacekeeping missions were reported. Even more appalling is the fact that allegations involving the most serious forms of sexual exploitation and abuse — sexual exploitation of and sexual acts with minors — continue to constitute more than 50 per cent of all those reported.

The protection of civilians is a clear, overarching objective for United Nations peacekeeping operations. It often involves issues directly related to the protection of civilians, including protecting them from conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking.

In that regard, it is even more striking that reports of alleged sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, often involving those who are vulnerable and whom the United Nations has been called upon to protect, have continued to surface for years. We believe that the Security Council should send a strong message with regard to that problem. Ukraine welcomes the recent report (A/70/729) of the Secretary-General on special measures on protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and his efforts to prevent such incidents. We support planned activities on prevention, enforcement and remedial action, including support to victims, as outlined in the report of the Secretary General, and we fully agree his recommendations.

We also appreciate the focus on that issue in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/682) on the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. We welcome the appointment of Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Apart from protecting the local population from sexual exploitation and abuse, it is also of particular importance that the United Nations policy in that area be focused on prioritizing the security and well-being of victims, including by maintaining confidentiality during investigations, helping to minimize trauma and facilitating access to immediate care and medical and psychological support. Among the important components of the relevant preventive policy, special attention must also be paid to vetting all peacekeeping personnel, along with respective predeployment training. In that regard, we welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to require certificates of compliance, and we express full support for the United Nations human rights screening policy.

As an active troop- and police-contributing country, Ukraine is paying a great deal of attention to the issue that we are discussing today. In order to send well-trained and properly prepared peacekeepers to serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations throughout the world, our special peacekeeping training centre at our national police academy and our training and research centre on international peacekeeping activity at the National Defence Academy of Ukraine are up and running. Both

of those institutions provide the necessary training for military and police personnel in accordance with United Nations requirements, including on the subject of the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. In that context, Ukraine re-affirms its determination to strictly implement a zero-tolerance policy among its peacekeepers. We fully recognize our two-fold responsibility, as a member elected to the Council and as an active peacekeeping nation, to strengthen the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse and create a system of accountability for the perpetrators of such acts. Concrete and effective preventive measures must be instituted. A much more aggressive approach to ensuring justice has to be pursued. Accountability must be real and public.

For those reasons, we support the draft resolution put forward by the United States.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Spain would like to express its enormous gratitude for the outstanding work that our Blue Helmets are carrying out. We believe that it is appropriate, on the day after of having just returned from a Security Council trip during which we were able observe the work of the Blue Helmets on the ground, to once again recall the admirable work that they are carrying out in what are certainly difficult conditions. Nevertheless, there are issues, such as the ones that we are discussing today, that are clearly tarnishing the image and the work of the United Nations. Our collective responsibility is therefore to put a definitive end to their reoccurrence. But the responsibility of the Security Council is not limited only to peacekeeping operations, but to all operations that have been authorized by the Council.

I do not think it is a matter of pointing fingers at one country or one troop-contributor for having committed acts that I qualify as horrendous. The essence of this discussion is for us to establish a collective response by members of the Council. For that reason, the delegation of Spain would like to focus on three essential aspects to improve the situation: first, prevention; secondly, investigation; and, thirdly accountability.

With regard to prevention, I believe that it is absolutely fundamental for troop-contributing countries to maximally tighten the procedures involved for training their military personnel. If Blue Helmets are properly trained by the troop-contributing countries, we will have achieved significant progress. On that account, I would like to highlight the importance that we attach to troop-contributing countries certifying to the United Nations that those training courses have actually taken place and meet what must be high-quality and excellent standards. That certification needs to be renewed and reviewed on a very frequent basis. For if we really want to be efficient in the fight against sexual violence, we must confront the root causes, and those causes lead us to the sad conclusion that, unfortunately, they have a very specific impact in the case of women and children.

Perhaps a significant preventive measure to achieve substantial progress would be to double the percentage of women in peacekeeping operations. That will be a measure that will have a significant impact. I recall that that measure is included in resolution 2242 (2015). Its impact will be positive not only in general terms, but also because the victims, most of whom are women, in the context of peacekeeping operations will feel more free and less afraid to report possible abuses that have been committed.

Secondly, on investigation, it is necessary to implement urgent measures aimed at carrying out investigations of received allegations within a maximum time frame of six months. A time frame of six months seems reasonable to me. But if within six months the troop-contributing country has not shed light on facts, I believe that the Security Council and the United Nations system should establish an inquiry mechanism that should be set up at a maximum of nine months from the time that the crime in question was committed.

Thirdly, on accountability, this concerns the Security Council and all troop- and police- contributing countries, because we must to put in place the measures necessary to ensure that the perpetrators are judged and punished.

Spain warmly welcomes the measures set out in the Secretary-General's latest report (A/70/729), in particular those pertaining to the repatriation of a whole contingent if the elements I have mentioned fail and the troop-contributing country does not cooperate with the United Nations in line with the agreements established by the Organization. For those countries whose armed forces have been mentioned in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports with regard to cases of children in armed conflict or sexual violence in conflicts, I sincerely urge them to cooperate with

the Organization so that all those crimes do not remain unpunished.

In conclusion, I would like to say that there are civilians who are targets of abuse and sexual violence by some individuals who are supposed to be there to protect them. For those victims, I believe that the least they expect of us, which they deserve, is that we protect them adequately and, if abuses occur, the Security Council spares no effort in shedding light on such cases as quickly as possible. I therefore think that the adoption of a draft resolution on this specific issue is urgent, needed and totally appropriate.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): We thank the Secretary-General for his helpful briefing and engagement on this important issue. We also welcome his report (A/70/729) and its recommendations, and the appointment of Jane Holl Lute Special Coordinator.

Let me begin by acknowledging the vital work carried out by peacekeepers serving with missions mandated by the Council, and by paying testament to the courage and commitment they display in carrying out their role in trying and dangerous circumstances. As mentioned, Council membes saw this directly in recent days on their visit to West Africa. But today we must be frank in also acknowledging that our systems for preventing, monitoring and responding to instances of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel are failing. This failure is inflicting a terrible cost on the people that our peacekeepers are responsible for protecting. The reputation and effectiveness of the Organization are being damaged.

These allegations represent more than isolated, individual instances of wrong doing, and they are not restricted to one or two missions. They represent a systemic failure that all of us — the Secretariat, contributing countries and Council members — have a responsibility to fix. Continuing to muddle through with our current business-as-usual approach is simply not an option.

Zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse has been our mantra for the past decade, and yet despite this, and despite the many policies, standards and procedures that have been put in place to address this since Prince Zeid's landmark report (see A/59/710), we continue to see new allegations emerge against peacekeepers and to learn of new victims of crimes that are, at times, of an horrific nature. This is despite the considerable high-level attention directed to this issue, including by the Secretary- General himself, over the past year.

We are not lacking a clear problem definition, or policies and standards. What we are lacking appears to be the political will to implement and enforce these standards. Too often, a blind eye is turned to allegations and no action is taken to hold those responsible to account. We need to create a genuine culture of zero tolerance — a culture where there is clear accountability, both for abuse and for its prevention, reporting and prosecution; a culture where the fear of reputational damage from acknowledging allegations does not override the responsibility to respond effectively; a culture where the real stigma lies not with the allegations themselves, but in failing to adequately report and respond.

New Zealand understands that there are no quick and easy solutions and that there are many practical and operational challenges. We can address this problem only if all concerned — the Council, the wider United Nations system and troop- and police-contributing countries — work together collaboratively to find solustions. At the heart of our response must be the victims of abuse and their right to respect, support and accountability. An effective response to serious crimes and human rights violations will also go some way towards restoring the credibility of United Nations peacekeeping missions in the communities they are sent to protect.

Council members have been working on a draft resolution to address these shortcomings. New Zealand thanks the United States for its initiative. The Security Council can support action in several key areas.

First, we must support the Secretary-General's commitment to repatriating those contingents that demonstrate a widespread or systematic pattern of sexual exploitation or abuse or a consistent failure to adequately follow up on allegations.

Secondly, we must remove the obstacles around making complaints and ensure better management of all complaints received. Processes for dealing with victims need to be centrally coordinated and managed more carefully and confidentially.

Thirdly, victims need to receive the support, assistance and responses that they deserve. Many aspects of the approach in the 2008 United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to

Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse should simply be baseline work for any United Nations mission.

Fourthly, the United Nations needs to get more serious about systems and resources for vetting peacekeepers. The current policy is limited to screening senior leadership only, and the United Nations needs to invest much more in order to go further than that.

Fifthly, we need a better process and division of roles on investigative duties. No national legal system would build in a 10-day delay to begin investigation, as set for the United Nations if a troop- or police-contributing country is unable to investigate.

Finally, we believe that it is beyond question that the Council has both a right and an obligation to engage on this issue. New Zealand fully respects the competence and role of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Fifth Committee, but we strongly disagree with the suggestion that the Council is not responsible for the consequences of the mandates it approves or for the actions of the personnel it deploys. The draft resolution we have is primarily about implementing and enforcing the standards that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the General Assembly have agreed or acknowledged already.

We can and must provide for more effective responses to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping. We owe it to the victims, to ourselves, to the peacekeepers who have given their lives, and to the values on which the Organization was founded.

Mr. Bermudez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank the presidency of the Security Council for convening today's meeting and the Secretary-General for his substantive briefing.

Uruguay, as both a member of the Security Council and a troop-contributing country with a long history of involvement in various peacekeeping operations, attaches great importance to combating cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and, as such, is highly committed to the United Nations zero-tolerance policy in such cases. Whoever commits sexual exploitation and abuse is acting in a way that it is to be condemned in every sense. But from a penal perspective, it is an aggravating factor because the perpetrator is exploiting the trust of those who require protection and is in clear violation of the mandate under which he is deployed. I emphasize that in these cases, Uruguay is a troop-contributing country has been moving tirelessly forward in this field by increasing prevention through predeployment training, adequate control on the ground and the right leadership at all levels.

There is not a single case of sexual exploitation and abuse that has not been duly and speedily resolved when a Uruguayan has been involved, complying thereby with due process with maximum guarantees for accused and accuser alike, applying appropriate measures to those found guilty of committing such acts. The accountability of the perpetrators and support for the victims are ensured in legal provisions adopted by the Uruguayan Government, thereby confirming its commitment to human rights and the dignity of the victims. Without claiming to be exhaustive, let me mention certain measures designed by Uruguay to advance the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse.

All members of national contingents must pass a predeployment course, designed by professionals outside the armed forces and with the participation of the United Nations country office with respect to human rights, international humanitarian law, sexual exploitation and abuse policy, gender policy and child protection policy. All members must sign a predeployment affidavit in which they acknowledge that they have been instructed in the aforementioned topics and accepti responsibilities arising from the breach thereof, authorizing the payroll deduction of disciplinary repatriation and associated costs.

Uruguay has communicated to the United Nations and the authorities of peacekeeping missions in which Uruguayan contingents contact details of a focal point in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where people implicated in possible cases of exploitation sexual abuse committed by Uruguayan troops — including paternity cases — or their legal representatives can seek advice concerning procedures avilable to them for exercising their rights under Uruguayan law. Uruguay's Ministry of National Defence has put in place a protocol to provide the broadest possible guarantees in the procedures to be followed from the identification of a possible case of sexual exploitation and abuse to its resolution. It includes the requisite measures to be taken with regard to perpetrators and the support to be offered to the victims. We are in the process of developing a mechanism to facilitate victims' access to the justice system, with a view to ensuring their rights and substantiating their allegations. Many of the complementary measures we

have adopted in connection with the responsibility of each troop deployed to a peacekeeping operation have also contributed to ensuring that we were able to collect DNA samples from the accused.

As I mentioned earlier, the commitment of Uruguay with regard to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse is based on respect for human rights and the dignity of victims. That is the main reason that we should continue work until there is never another case. However, I do not want to fail to mention the systemic damage that such cases cause for United Nations peacekeeping efforts, whether to peacekeeping operations or other operations authorized by the Security Council operations. Uruguay is seriously concerned about the negative impact of such cases on the credibility and image of peacekeeping operations, as well as the negative impact in terms of the ability to fulfil mission mandates.

Above all, however, we are especially concerned that, while there is a wide range of behaviours that comprise a case of sexual exploitation and abuse involving military, police or civilian personnel, the fact is that those responsible cross an unacceptable line, which in many instances may involve violations of human rights but in all cases involve an assault on the dignity of victims. Unfortunately, such cases end up tarnishing and affecting the heroic and responsible work of the more than 100,000 peacekeeping personnel deployed in the various missions, some of whom lose their lives in the field in pursuit of their the mandates.

Let me conclude by saying that, notwithstanding the fact that the Security Council is addressing this issue today — and rightly and in a timely manner — Uruguay stresses the importance of other bodies of the General Assembly, such as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Fifth Committee, holding similar discussions. Given the seriousness and sensitivity of the issuse before us, there is nothing incompatible about having more than one body addreess the matter, and there should be no fear of duplicating effort. In that regard, Uruguay hopes that the negotiations that are taking place in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations will come to a successful conclusion, in particular in relation to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Angola.

We thank the Secretary-General for presenting to the Security Council his report (A/70/229) on special measures on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, which provides an analysis and strategies to counter this outrageous phenomenon in the United Nations system. We welcome the holding of this debate, which affords the members of the Council an opportunity to renew their political support to the Secretary-General in implementing the zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, as well as our resolve in condemning such actions.

The report of the Secretary-General refers to an increase in the number of alleged cases in 2015, following a decrease in 2014, involving a relatively high proportion of minors and non-consensual relations involving adults — with cases in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic reaching a peak. Angola strongly condemns violence against civilians, in particular sexually related violence — against women, girls and boys — by United Nations peacekeepers. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and welcome the continuous commitment and strengthening of measures aimed at accountability based on the principles of transparency and impartiality. We are encouraged by his renewed commitment to ensure that reported allegations are fully and promptly investigated, in cooperation with troop-contributing countries, to ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

In that regard, we deem predeployment training as an essential tool to avoid misconduct and ensure that troops strictly respect the Organization's standards of conduct. It is important to systematically include the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence and its follow-up in the relevant country-specific resolutions and the mandates of special political and peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, increasing the number of women in peacekeeping operations and police units can help combat stigma and threats of reprisal, which impede victims from reporting. We welcome the Secretary-General's plan to develop a community-based complaint reception mechanism — a measure that I am sure will help to address the fear among victims that we see today. We also suppor the proposal that troop-contributing countries enter into bilateral agreements with the Office of Internal Oversight Services to authorize it to investigate alleged cases by members of military contingents, either independently or in cooperation with national investigation officers. Other measures,

such as better-calibrated rotation schedules, adequate provision of welfare programmes and better standards of living for troops and the regular payment of salaries to uniformed personnel, are sensible measures capable of addressing the need for a reduction in such cases.

We have just returned from a Council mission to Mali, where we saw a peacekeeping mission deployed under the most challenging circumstances. We pay special tribute to those heroic peacekeepers, not just in Mali but in other theatres, in very special circumstances, who unfortunately see their work being tarnished by the actions of a few. We should act on this issue very vigorously.

We took good note of the recommendations by the external independent panel to review the United Natins response, and especially of the Secretary-General's clear and forward-looking proposals to strengthen measures to prevent and protect and to enforce accountability, management and remedial action in response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Finally, we have taken note of the draft resolution presented by the United States. We are ready to continue work on it in a constructive spirit in order to achieve a Council document that is the good product we would like to see put in place.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: First I would like to thank the President for taking the initiative to organize a debate on this very important subject, which has a lot to do with our reputation and future work. The open discussion on this shameful issue will create a sense of urgency with regard to and raise awareness of the need to take immediate action based on the principles of accountability and transparency.

This issue has not only humbled me; it has left me feeling very regretful and ashamed as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I am sure that the message that the Council has conveyed strongly and unambiguously will help to strengthen my commitment as well as that of the senior advisors of the United Nations engaged in this area. Again, I feel deeply sorry for the victims, in particular those minors whose human rights and dignity have been abused. I apologize for not having taken more thorough care on this matter. I thank the Council for presenting clear guidelines and directions to the Secretariat, myself and the world. The United Nations is very committed.

As Ambassador Samantha Power has so eloquently, passionately and emotionally stated, this matter greatly affects our reputation. Why were we unable to address this issue much, much earlier? Only a few people are responsible for the problem. There is a saying that a small mudfish can make an otherwise clean stream dirty. We must eliminate thse practices. We must get rid of those mudfish, and I am very much committed to working with the Council on this matter. At the same time, despite the shamefulness of the issue, we must honour the integrity, sacrifice and hard work of the tens of thousands of peacekeepers and police officers who are working under very difficult and often dangerous circumstances. We have lost a lot of peacekeepers. We really have to honour them. Their reputation, integrity and honour should not be tarnished by this small number of people. I am really commiting myself on this matter.

During my term as Secretary-General, which began in 2007, the issue of ending violence against women has been one of my top priorities. Council members may remember that I launched the Unite to End Violence against Women campaign in 2008. Then, in 2009, knowing that the mentality of men must be changed, I established the Network of Men Leaders. I reached out to a great number of men leaders in Governments and the business community, and religious leaders. We have been working to eliminate these practices.

However, we see now that we have been neglecting our own in-house concerns. This has happened in-house, and we have to take greater responsibility for this matter. I appointed the first Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and I have a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. And I have appointed most recently Jane Holl Lute. Appointing special representatives or responsible persons may be helpful, but I need the support of everybody — all Member States, the Secretariat, and people working in the field. We all must work together.

As I have presented in my report (A/70/729), I think this matter should be addressed comprehensively. First and foremost, we have to do much more to end this violence and help the victims. I appreciate the willingness of Member States to provide financial and other material support to a trust fund. At the same time, I am also grateful that Member States agree to my proposal to withhold the salaries of those that have

committed violence and to transfer those salaries to a trust fund. That is a a small effort, but I do need the strong support of Member States.

Measures to ensure accountability should be formulated, strengthened and implemented. Without an accountability process firmly established in mindsets as well as in our system, I regret to say that we will see this kind of crime continue. In that regard, I am making sure that our investigations of currently pending cases are expedited. From 2010 through 2015, we received 407 cases of alleged abuse. Eighty per cent of them have been concluded. As of the end of 2015, we still had 54 cases pending. I believe that a large number of those 54 cases were reported in 2015. We have concluded all investigations up through 2012. We still have three cases from 2013 and three cases pending from 2014. We will make sure to expedite the investigations as much as possible. Out of 407 cases, we have concluded 353. However, 48 cases remain . I will make sure that investigations are expedited. Although I suggested a six-month investigation period, we will shorten the process further.

Once allegations have been reported or a report has been received, we will take interim measures. For example, the persons involved may be suspended from the mission or confined to the barracks, or assigned to another mission, which will then have to confine that person within the mission. And of course, salaries will be withheld as much as possible.

Now, during the course of discussions some Member States have stated — and of course I agree with them — that the honour and reputation of troop-contributing countries should be respected. We have tried to do that by not disclosing the names of countries until most recently. However, we have realized that this is not very helpful. That is why last year we returned the personnel of certain Member States, whose names have already been publicized, and established a conduct and discipline website where we are making all the names of the countries and cases available at all times to Member States and the international community.

There may always be a question about whether naming and shaming is a good policy or not at this time. Sometimes we need to make it known to the public so that they will also be motivated to improve their way of conducting their business. In that regard, as most speakers today have explained and expressed, it is extremely important for troop-contributing countries to offer firm and strong predeployment education and training on the importance of respecting human rights, particularly gender empowerment and balance. Without the strong engagement and commitment of the Member States, it will be extremely difficult for the Secretariat to manage these cases alone.

As Secretary-General for the past many years, I have directly confronted many Heads of State, face to face, and told them: "You cannot go on like this". Some Heads of State have made excuses, saying that the alleged crime was not committed by their people. I am talking about national crimes of sexual violance, not United Nations-related. They say that the crimes are committed by rebels. "Eut Mr. President," I reply, "Are you not the leader of a sovereign State? Whoever commits these crimes within your territorial boundaries is your responsibility. You have to be accountable." I have gone face to face in my fights with Heads of State.

I again commit myself to confronting any country that continues to permit such crimes. Particularly at the United Nations, we have to clean house; only then can I go out to Member States worldwide to eradicate sexual violence against women. That is my strong commitment, and I really count on the strong engagement and support of Member States. I truly appreciate the fact that the Security Council has raised this issue.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his clarification.

The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I know I had the floor at length earlier, so I will try to be as brief as possible. Like the Secretary-General, because of the gravity of what we are discussing here and the insufficiency of what we have mustered up to this point as an international community, I think it is worth coming back to some of the points of convergence around the table, as well as the few points of divergence, which I do not think we should paper over.

First, in response to something my Egyptian colleagues mentioned with respect to the number of cases, I just want to seek clarification because, at least as interpreted, there was an initial reference to several dozen cases, but later to only a handful of cases. I want to state for the record that it is more than several dozen cases, and certainly far more than a handful. We had more than 69 allegations in 2015; we have already had

26 people come forward to report cases in 2016. But we have no idea how pervasive this problem is. We have no idea. I think that everyone believes that one case is one too many, but I think we need to be very careful given the details outlined the Secretary-General's report (A/70/729). We need at least to all mobilize around the extent of the problem that has managed to be documented. I suspect that if there were better reporting in more places, unfortunately we would likely see more allegations being brought forward. But that is a supposition. Let us at least have a shared understanding of the facts that have been presented by the Secretary-General.

Secondly, like a number of Council members that have made this point, we totally agree that there cannot be collective guilt or national stigmatization. I think that is extremely important, and all of us have tried to make that point in our statements. But that is why individual responsibility and accountability, as well as individual punishment if warranted, are so important. And it is not happening, by and large. I shall come back to the Secretary-General's statistics in a second, but the definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again — or not do the same thing over and over again — and expect a different result. The system that has been in place has not had the desired effect, in two respects.

Allegations keep being brought forward, with a lot of documentation — photographs of babies whose DNA has been tested, and so on. This is happening; this is a phenomenon. Moreover, the individual perpetrators of these crimes are not being punished back in their home countries. I particularly appreciated the Secretary-General's extemporaneous comments in that regard. Absolutely, the United Nations and the individuals who serve it have to do much more, but we do not have court martial processes or courtrooms in this building, so the Member States have to support the Secretary-General. He can do everything he sets out to do in the report, which he and those who work for the United Nations must do, but he needs us. What he does is totally necessary and not at all sufficient. We have got to make changes. We cannot just say the same things we have been saying for a decade and expect the outcomes to be different — that there is going to be less sexual abuse or more accountability in capitals.

Thirdly, the representative of Egypt said that the General Assembly is the competent body to deal with what my friend and colleague rightly denounced as these horrific crimes. The United States is part of the General Assembly. We would welcome constructive action by the General Assembly, but the General Assembly has had 11 years since our last open security meeting on this topic (see S/PV.5191) to take more aggressive and constructive steps that might have made more of a dent in this problem. What we in the General Assembly have done has not yet worked. The facts are the facts; the allegations are the allegations; the record of inaction in the capitals is by and large a record that shames us all, including those of us who have very strong bilateral relationships with a lot of the countries concerned. We have not been as aggressive as we needed to be.

What is hard about hearing the jurisdictional argument again and again about how this issue belongs somewhere else is that in, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, Egypt has consistently refused to support language welcoming or taking note of the Secretary-General's report. Somewhere, these steps have to be taken and the Security Council has waited a long time for those steps to be taken and for the kind of consensus we need in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to give the Secretary-General the support he needs and to be more aggressive, commensurate with the gravity of this set of crimes. Again, if it were happening to our kids, we would not be having jurisdictional fights like this. We would not even think that it does not belong here, and yet — because it is somebody else's kids — we want to push this off somewhere else, where we know there will be a stalemate and gridlock and we will find ourselves in the same world in which we have been. And that is a world that is not working for these victims.

Fourthly, and this is related, several countries have again implied that the Security Council should stand down. I have to repeat, as a matter of logic — and maybe I am just not smart enough to follow all the jurisdictional hijinks that go on here at the United Nations — that in areas where peacekeepers are deployed, we, the Security Council, are responsible and try to take action when armies rape women and kids. We, the Security Council, see ourselves as responsible when non-State actors and militias rape women and kids, or men, for that matter. Again, we see ourselves as responsible when terrorists, who pose a grave threat to international peace and security, rape women and kids. How is it possible that we can argue that when our own peacekeepers, the people we have sent into the field, rape women and children, the Security Council does

not have responsibility? How can we say that? This is our problem, our responsibility.

Fifthly, the Secretary-General described cases closed. I would like to thank him once again for his leadership and the personal responsibility he has taken in insisting that we move beyond getting reports from the field that say that cases are closed, to a world of transparent and thorough investigations. We do not know why those cases were closed. Was it because people waited a year to go back and actually try to talk to a victim? Was it because the evidence had disappeared? Was it because the peacekeepers who were alleged to have committed the crimes were deployed out? Knowing what we know, and having tried to unpack a little of what happens in those investigations, I would be very careful about equating closed cases with just and thorough investigations.

Finally, my last point reinforces something that the Secretary-General, and I believe everyone in the Chamber, has said, which is that the peacekeepers, as the President also said, are serving in some of the worst circumstances imaginable. When they go back to their home countries, those men and women will find that their families will barely know where they have been, in places that none of their families or neighbours will ever have visited, and that they will have no parades, no celebration of the service that they have given overseas. It is an awesome sacrifice that the troops, police and civilians who serve in these missions are making, and the risks are off the charts.

The United States is not a big troop- or police-contributor to United Nations peacekeeping, and that gives us a lot of humility when we discuss this subject in the Council. When I look around this table I have even more respect, whether I am looking at Egypt or China or Senegal or Uruguay, which send thousands of peacekeepers into these environments. We salute them. That is why during his time as President Mr. Obama has devoted more time and energy than any other American President to trying to support peacekeeping. It is so important, and so thankless. We should do more to honour that service, and I think that is a great point of convergence around this table. These people are saving thousands of lives — hundreds of thousands, probably — every day, if we think about what the situations would be like without them.

We must also be clear as to who the victims are as we talk about that is happening in the field. They are not the United Nations troops and police, most of whom, as everyone has said, with such distinction and bravery. They are the men, women and, far too often, the children who are the victims of rape, sexual abuse and other violations of human rights, committed by the very people who were sent to protect them. Those are the victims. We cannot forget that fact as we debate about what to do. We cannot forget who the victims are or how we would act if we actually knew those victims — if they were not numbers or abstractions but people we knew, people we were related to, people we cared about.

The President: The representative of Egypt has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have listened very attentively today to the Secretary-General's statement and to the words of our friend the representative of the United States. I would like to clarify some points, since evidently my statement did not come across clearly to the Security Council in the way I would have wished.

First, my delegation's insistence on respecting the mandate of the General Assembly in investigating matters related to sexual exploitation and abuse is based on our belief in the importance of tackling such cases and eliminating them, enhancing accountability and the partnerships between the Secretariat, the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and other Member States. No body whose membership is by definition limited can impose commitments on TCCs without consulting them and enabling them to conduct investigations, specify accountability and punish the perpetrators of such crimes.

On the other hand, I am in full agreement with the other members of the Council that the majority of peacekeeping operations are doing heroic work and making enormous sacrifices, and that intensifies our objection to a policy of collective punishment of such forces, including proposals to return or repatriate entire contingents as a result of one mistake made by one person or member of a unit. Accountability must be limited to those actually involved in crimes, and no one else, or we open the door to arbitrary measures that are not subject to objective considerations. That is on top of the fact that there have seen numerous cases in which troops from outside the United Nations have participated in sexually abusive activities that have not been put before the Security Council to enable it to take

the necessary punitive measures. That issue must be dealt with if we are serious about tackling such crimes in all their aspects and in a way that preserves human dignity everywhere, and not selectively.

With regard to the reference to Egypt's position on the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, our reservations were due to our rejection of the concept of field trials, because they are detrimental to considerations of sovereignty. That is the position of most of the TCCs. We asked for extra time for consultations, and we are prepared to look further into the best ways of finding appropriate and fair solutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): We thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to express our views on a topic of great importance to all of us. We feel that the views of the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) can enrich this debate and lead to informed decisions.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's resolve in pursuing a zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation by peacekeepers. Pakistan, as a major TCC, fully supports zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. Those deputed to defend must not be allowed to take advantage of the vulnerable with impunity. We take our responsibility as a TCC extremely seriously. We are fully conscious of the need for punitive actions against perpetrators of such heinous acts, which tarnish both the image of the United Nations as well as of the TCC itself, in addition to tainting the good work of peacekeeping in general. We have taken strict action against perpetrators in substantiated cases.

While we agree that one case is one too many and that there is no justification whatsoever for such callous behaviour, the report (A/70/729) of the Secretary-General itself identifies factors that may have led to an increase in such cases, including the hurried re-hatting of troops, the lack of predeployment training on standards of conduct, the excessive length of deployment of contingents, the living conditions of troops, including lack of welfare and communications facilities to stay in touch with their loved ones, and camps in proximity to, or not properly separated from, local populations, et cetera. Let me make a few points on the report and the process that we have and need to follow from here on.

There should be no ambiguity in the minds of anyone that as a TCC we are committed to getting rid of this scourge. We all pay lip service to trilateral cooperation. It is important to consult TCCs in the process of developing effective guidelines and mechanisms to stem this scourge. Collective punitive action is against the concept of justice and fair play and merits careful review. In principle, the Member States and its contingents cannot, and should not, be held responsible for the criminality of an individual. Distinctions between accusation and conviction are important and must be maintained. The focus of the narrative currently seems to be on allegations. Overly intrusive and prescriptive calls on Member States to review their criminal procedures and legislation should be avoided.

Recommendations related to the compensation of victims and the establishment of mechanisms for providing medical and legal assistance are appreciated. However, the establishment of a trust fund should be well thought through and implemented prudently. Preventive steps must be taken along with remedial measures, while addressing the issues of better planning and deployment, the rotation of troops and providing them with better facilities would have a positive impact.

Last but not least, we firmly believe that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the General Assembly (C-34), which, incidentally, is compiling its report at this very moment, is the forum in which to discuss issues relating to the conduct and discipline of peacekeepers. Recommendations in the Secretary-General's report need to be discussed and analysed in the C-34 in a transparent and inclusive manner. The logic for that was very eloquently stated by the Permanent Representative of Egypt just now.

Our troops are deployed in dangerous and violent situations, shedding their blood for the common cause of promoting international peace and security. Their contributions should not be sullied by the acts of a few. Any action by this body that could lead to a generic blaming of peacekeepers is bound to negatively impact the morale of the troops on the ground. That, we feel, should be avoided.

Let me, in conclusion, reiterate our commitment with regard to the fact that sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers cannot, and should not, be allowed to continue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I thank you, Mr. President, for providing us an opportunity to express our views on what are extraordinarily disturbing issues.

We share the Secretary-General's distress, so passionately articulated in his oral briefing and in his report (A/70/729) to the General Assembly. I will be very brief. As a country that has provided peacekeepers to 48 of the 68 United Nations peacekeeping operations, and as a country with the largest cumulative number of troops being contributed to the United Nations, we are deeply disturbed by this increasing phenomenon. We have contributed our troops because we see peacekeeping as the shining example of the international community's commitment to collective security. Therefore, to us, it is very worrisome that the protectors are now being widely perceived as predators.

We in India have a policy of zero tolerance. In our approach, there is no hesitation or reluctance. It would be immoral if it had been so. Aberrations have taken place in United Nations peacekeeping, and they are abhorrent and repugnant. That is particularly so given the confidence that has been reposed in the Blue Helmets and in the Organization.

The malaise that we are confronting is not one merely of enforcing compliance, but of setting norms. What we are venturing into is putting emphasis on values of universal application. The approach and the cures that have been mentioned require a format that is more broad-based and more inclusive than merely addressing the issue as a matter of peace and security. What we need to do is to send a message that we are together in addressing it, not a feeling that we are addressing it as a command issue. Regaining our collective reputation as exemplars of universal idealism is too important a matter to be confined to a few. It requires the participation of all, not the least the troop-contributing countries. That may be difficult. And it may be frustrating and slow. But as the medium is the message, then the message we ought to convey can be only through a more inclusive format. Anything less will, in our view, not convey the same message.

We will continue to support the effort to implement the United Nations zero-tolerance policy. We will continue to work with other Member States in this endeavour, and the Secretary-General will have our full cooperation in the effort.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Sana (Rwanda): It is with conviction that I share with the Security Council Rwanda's stance and commitment to ending sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations. I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. We take note of the recommendations contained in his report (A/70/729) to the General Assembly on the sexual exploitation and abuse. We hope that all Member States, in particular all troop-contributing countries, will have an opportunity to share their views in that regard. We also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse.

Rwanda is more than committed to ensuring that as we deliver on our responsibility to protect we protect with the utmost integrity the lives of those we have been tasked to safeguard. The Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, an outcome of the International Conference on the Protection of Civilians held last year, has touched on this important issue by advancing the steps that must be taken to achieve a zero-tolerance policy, while at the same time underscoring the need to report on all human rights abuses. We believe that all sexual violence and abuse is unacceptable. Our military and judicial policies are a strong testament of our commitment to ending such abhorrent actions. Let me be clear: even one case, in our view, is unacceptable, and should not be tolerated. The protectors should not be perpetrators. There is no justification whatsoever for cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. Any allegation should be reported and investigated, with legal action taken against the alleged perpetrators.

Combating sexual exploitation and abuse begins long before peacekeepers arrive in the mission area. Discipline and a code of conduct anchored in our culture and within national jurisdictions is paramount in preventing, fighting and eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse, which in the end undermines the credibility of peacekeepers, who are doing a tremendous job in different missions, including making the ultimate sacrifice.

My country has an absolute-zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. We ensure that our troops and police receive thorough training, which covers sexual exploitation and abuse, for which

we also use United Nations manuals as additional reference. In terms of our judiciary, the Rwandan penal code punishes all those found guilty of the crime, including peacekeepers operating internationally. My Government has also committed to combating sexual exploitation and abuse, including by deploying a legal adviser and an investigator in each battalion of our contingents deployed in United Nations peacekeeping missions since 2011.

In the case of Rwanda, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, three inquiries have been undertaken into inappropriate relationships between adult women and Rwandan police officers formerly serving in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. That allegation represents a serious violation of our Government policies. Investigations have been ongoing and strong administrative measures have been taken as we await their completion.

As Member States, we must continue to report, prosecute and punish those who have been convicted of taking advantage of the most vulnerable, the women and children entangled in today's conflicts. The victims are our mothers, our sisters and our daughters. This effort should also apply to those operating as non-United Nations personnel working under a Security Council mandate. It should also be expected that national and regional entities deployed outside the United Nations mandate are held to the same standard as United Nations personnel, including independent investigations with the outcomes brought to the attention of the appropriate bodies for action. Transparency, objectivity and accountability should characterize the Secretariat's work in addressing this issue.

In addition to the obligation incumbent upon the troop-contributing countries, there is a great need for regular interaction between the Secretariat and TCCs when it comes to investigations. Therefore, updates from both sides are necessary before reports are released. Most often, the Secretariat does not consult Member States. Yet there are cases that have been investigated and legal action taken, but are not included in the reports. At the same time, non-policy violations should not divert attention from, or dilute responsibility for, the numerous unresolved cases of rape and child abuse by peacekeeping forces. We therefore call upon the United Nations and troop-contributing countries to remain focused on accountability for this heinous crime.

In conclusion, let me say that the time to take immediate and effective action is now. We must all, individually and collectively, do what is in our means to enforce the zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse, while also working towards eradicating the existence of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. As we continue to work within our capacities to strengthen all measures related to sexual exploitation and abuse, we must also hold other stakeholders accountable. By working collectively and with transparency we can eliminate past wrongdoing and refocus our efforts on upholding the infinite act of great courage undertaken by our peacekeepers time and time again.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.